Targeting in an Engineer Brigade

By Major Gary S. Bonham and Major Jakob C. Bruhl

While deployed to Mosul, Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 130th Engineer Brigade struggled to use targeting methodology. To correspond with its major efforts, the brigade had developed four lines of effort (LOEs):

- Reconstruction.
- Assured mobility.
- Iraqi Security Force partnership.
- General engineering.

Then, the brigade attempted to use targeting to—

- Give the commander situational awareness on the progress of LOEs.
- Obtain the commander's guidance.
- Revise resource priorities.

However, the attempt to use the targeting process did not seem to work. Targeting meetings devolved into commander update briefings, the targeting working group became a rehearsal for the targeting meeting, working groups conducted by the LOEs had little connection to the targeting meetings, and intelligence was not clearly integrated into each LOE. Frustrated, brigade leaders reexamined and revised the targeting process. This enabled the brigade to better incorporate the LOE working groups and changed the commander update briefings into true targeting meetings.

This article examines the targeting process and how engineer brigades operating in counterinsurgency or stability operating environments can benefit from using it. It is the authors' contention that the targeting process can help engineer brigade staffs and commanders develop frameworks to guide and assess progress in achieving campaign objectives and end states. An effective targeting process enables LOEs such as assured mobility, general engineering, reconstruction, or security force assistance to conduct effective working groups that are linked to the targeting process and supported by the entire staff to achieve their goals. It gives the staff an effective way to show the commander the progress toward objectives and end states and gives the commander the necessary framework to allocate resources and establish targeting priorities.

Since "targeting is the process of selecting targets and matching the appropriate response to them, taking into account operational requirements and capabilities,"[1] it should apply across the warfighting functions and to all units. The targeting methodology used is a time-tested and proven cyclical method for identifying, tracking, and engaging targets, followed by an assessment of effectiveness. The U.S. Army applies the same targeting methodology to information operations that it does to lethal operations. Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, states that the methodology applies to "all operations, not just attacks against insurgents."[2] It further states that ways to engage nonlethal targets include "CMO [civil-military operations], IO [information operations], negotiation, political programs, economic programs, social program and other noncombat methods."[3] The manual stops short of explaining how to use the targeting methodology in nonlethal operations or by other-than-maneuver units.

Targeting can effectively occur only within the context of an operational or tactical framework. The framework developed by the 130th Engineer Brigade allowed the commander and staff to "continuously assess the current situation and the progress of the operation and compare it with the concept of operations, mission, and commander's intent."[4] As FM 3-24 states, "operational design and execution cannot really be separated. They are both part of the same whole."[5] Targeting is the link between the plan design and execution; the targeting process provides flexibility to adjust to changing conditions, identify new opportunities to meet the commander's intent, and synchronize efforts across the organization.[6] Prompted by several factors—including

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coaching by the observers/trainers at the brigade mission readiness exercise in April 2009—the brigade staff set forth to apply the targeting process in its battle rhythm.

During the exercise and the first several months of its subsequent deployment to Iraq, the staff struggled to apply the methodology to its operations, which were organized along the four LOEs.

Only one of these LOEs had a traditional use for targeting—assured mobility identified violent extremist networks and improvised explosive device cells to target. Although the brigade did not have maneuver forces available to attack these targets, the assured mobility officer in charge participated in the U.S. Division–North and supported brigade combat team counter improvised explosive device working groups. For the other three LOEs, the use of targeting methodology was not intuitive and, in most cases, was applied very loosely.

Recognizing the need to make it work effectively, the brigade staff began to review the targeting process by developing a targeting synchronization matrix. While this would help the brigade track targets, a broader framework of objectives linked to the desired end states of each LOE was required. The brigade started with the end state and four key objectives that had been developed for each LOE. Further refining these, the brigade developed intermediate objectives for each key objective. As key objectives were revised and intermediate objectives were developed, care was taken to ensure that these were worded as objectives rather than as tasks. For each intermediate objective, LOE officers in charge attempted to identify measures of performance (MOPs) and measures of effectiveness (MOEs), along with a date that the LOE was expected to reach its objective.[7] The MOPs and MOEs included "observable, quantifiable, objective data as well as subjective indicators to assess progress measured against expectations."[8]

The intermediate objectives represented the basis of what the brigade would work toward, and the MOPs and MOEs provided agreed-upon goals. Targets were linked to one or more intermediate objectives and were tracked using the targeting synchronization matrix. Once that framework was established, the brigade could effectively use the targeting process. Using a standard "red, amber, and green" scale, the LOE officers in charge gave the commander a visual assessment of each intermediate objective during targeting decision briefings. Targets were derived from this assessment.

Targets were identified, planned, and resourced using the "decide-detect-deliver-assess" methodology described in FM 6-20-10, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Targeting Process*.[9] The LOE assessment provided the tool to identify potential targets. For example, if an intermediate objective was assessed as "red," the LOE officer in charge would be expected at least to have considered proposing a target to address that particular objective. (This was not a rigid requirement, and a target was not required if circumstances dictated otherwise.) However, if an intermediate objective was assessed as "green," there was no expectation for a proposed target, although there could be a reason to identify one to sustain the current assessment.

In most cases, a traditional understanding of the *decide* function applied:

- Developing priorities for tasking assets.
- Gathering and processing information.
- Determining a method to attack (or in most cases for the engineer brigade, affect or influence) the target.
- Assessing the effectiveness of the attack.

The *detect* function took a bit of a cognitive stretch to apply to the engineer brigade operations. Instead of determining which intelligence assets to devote to positively identifying the target, this function was combined with the *deliver* function to describe how the desired results should be reached. In most cases, the target was already identified. Since they were not moving targets in the traditional sense, detection did not neatly apply.

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Intelligence related to each LOE was incorporated into working groups. Some reporting was used to provide cultural background, while more reliable intelligence was integrated into target development. LOE officers in charge developed targets to mitigate a threat or capitalize on an assessed enemy vulnerability. By doing so, intelligence-driven operations became more obvious and allowed the commander to determine if the MOPs and MOEs should be adjusted to satisfy the desired end state.

The *deliver* function—"a technical solution,"[10]—applied; but instead of choosing specific attack units and the type of ordnance, it described how to execute the plan. In some cases, the delivery method resulted in a fragmentary order to subordinate units; in other cases, it led to staff action. The *assess* function was applied with very little deviation from the traditional understanding within targeting. Instead of assessing battle damage and munitions effects, targets were

assessed against the MOPs and MOEs identified during target development. In most cases, these were more subjective than quantitative.

Identifying the target, determining how to deliver required actions, and assessing their effectiveness are critical steps. In order to turn them into action, they must be approved by the commander. The brigade staff used a series of tools to inform the commander and seek decisions. Charts linked proposed targets to intermediate objectives and outlined the concept of the operation for the targets.

The final step in linking the targeting process with the campaign plan was to reassess the intermediate objectives upon the successful completion of a target or after the occurrence of outside events that could have an influence on an intermediate objective. From the updated intermediate objective assessment, the key objectives could be reassessed. Finally, a summary chart aided the brigade commander's understanding of the brigade progress toward the defined end state and provided a framework for additional guidance. This summary chart was presented every 2 weeks during the targeting decision briefing.

The 2-week targeting cycle evolved throughout the deployment. The brigade began with a 1-week cycle. After a few months of this battle rhythm, the staff agreed that it was too short for the pace of operations. Too much time was being spent preparing for meetings at which little change was presented. By changing to a 2-week targeting cycle, the brigade remained nested in its higher headquarters targeting cycle, provided adequate time for staff and subordinate units to effect change, and reduced the meeting preparation burden on the staff, which freed up more time to effect change. The brigade targeting cycle was driven by LOE working groups, which met weekly and fed into the bimonthly targeting working group that met the day before the targeting decision briefing to the commander. The targeting working group brought the staff together "to synchronize the targeting process and obtain approval for and/or changes to the targeting products."[11]

With the new battle rhythm, the staff had a more interactive and productive targeting working group that was no longer just a rehearsal for the upcoming briefing to the commander. Instead, the group had time to vet and discuss new targets, analyze and debate new assessments of intermediate and key objectives, and adjust following the working group. This translated into a more productive targeting decision briefing. Targets were now linked to intermediate objectives that were linked to the key objectives that were linked to the end state. Assessments of enemy actions and environmental factors were fully integrated into each LOE. The commander could look at the targets, compare them to his targeting priorities and the LOE assessments, and make a quick visual determination if they were in agreement. Another benefit of the new battle rhythm and revised targeting process was that they allowed the commander to review the targeting briefing before the meeting and prepare guidance and questions.

Targeting is not just for maneuver units; the process has great value for engineer brigades that are conducting counterinsurgency or stability operations. The effective use of the targeting methodology allowed the 130th Engineer Brigade to link targets to desired end states. It also allowed the brigade to conduct effective assessments of progress toward the desired end states through the intermediate and key objectives developed in support of the targeting process. The targeting process that the 130th Engineer Brigade developed during Operation Iraqi Freedom was an important contributing factor to brigade success and can serve as an example for other engineer brigades to use in the future.

Endnotes:

[1]FM 6-20-10, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Targeting Process*, 8 May 1996, p. 1-1. (Superseded by FM 3-60, *The Targeting Process*, 26 November 2010.)

[2]FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, 15 December 2006, para. 5-100.

[3]Ibid, para. 5-103.

[4]FM 3-0, *Operations*, 14 June 2001, para. 5-84.

[5]FM 3-24, para. 5-116.

[6]FM 6-20-10, p. 1-1.

[7]FM 3-0.

[8]FM 3-24, para. 5-96.

[9]FM 6-20-10.

[10]Ibid, p. 1-6.

[11]FM 3-09.12, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Field Artillery Target Acquisition*, 21 June 2002, p. 1-6.

Major Bonham is the executive officer for the 84th Engineer Battalion. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada, Reno; a master's degree from the University of Missouri–Rolla (now Missouri University of Science and Technology); and a master's of military art and science from the Naval War College. He is a professional engineer in the state of Nevada. When this article was written, he was the plans officer for the 130th Engineer Brigade.

Major Bruhl is the officer in charge of the 14th Engineer Detachment. He holds a bachelor's degree from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology; master's degrees from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign and the University of Missouri–Rolla (now Missouri University of Science and Technology); and a master of military art and science degree from the U.S. Air Force Air University. He is a professional engineer in the state of Missouri. When this article was written, he was the design engineer for the 130th Engineer Brigade.